of ban on exports of Indian goods from the land routes, promoting infrastructure linkages, boundary demarcation, expediting pending meetings, identifying ways and means to control cross-border crimes, etc. Starting of Agartala-Dhaka bus service, Agartala-Akhaura rail link was also discussed. In addition, the discussions also focussed on addressing of concerns of Bangladesh over its trade deficit with India. However, no Agreement or MoU was signed during the visit.

(c) and (d) It was agreed to hold the various pending bilateral meetings early including first meeting of Joint Group of Customs Officials and the Joint Working Group.

Extradition of Abu Salem

965. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Abu Salem, one of India's most wanted criminal, was arrested in Lisbon in September, 2002;

(b) if so, whether India has any extradition treaty with Portugal; and

(c) if not, steps taken by Government to arrange deportation of Abu Salem to India and success achieved in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) India does not have an Extradition Treaty with Portugal.

(c) Even though India does not have any Extradition Treaty with Portugal, the Portuguese Government has indicated its willingness to consider a request from the Government of India for the extradition of Abu Salem. All necesary steps are being taken by the concerned authorities in the Government of India to expedite matters in regard to the request for extradition of Abu Salem.

Economic Relations with Russia

966. SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps, if any, taken in the recent past to deepen economic

relationship with Russia, particularly in the oil, gas and defence sectors; and

(b) whether Government are contemplating any concrete initiatives to encourage increased interaction between business and political leaders of the two countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Mr. Ilya Klebanov, Minister of Industry and Science & Technology of the Russian Federation, visited India on 21-22 November 2002. During this visit, the Inter-Session Review Meeting of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation was held. The Meeting was co-chaired by Minister of External Affairs Shri Yashwant Sinha and Mr. Klebanov. The two sides discussed, *inter alia,* new possibilities of cooperation in economic and trade fields. It was decided that cooperation in oil and gas sector which includes the participation of the ONBC-Videsh Ltd in the Sakhalin-I project in Russia and of the Joint Stock company Gazprom in the Block No. 26 (NEC-OSN-91/1) in the Bay of Bengal in India, should be further strengthened. No concrete project was however discussed. During his visit, Mr. Klebanov met with Raksha Mantri Shri George Fernandes and reviewed a number of areas of bilateral defence cooperation between the two sides.

(b) There are regular exchanges of business and political leaders and delegations between Russia and India. H.E. Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, is scheduled to visit India from 3-5 December 2002.

Progress in Economic Cooperation within SAARC Framework

967. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the progress in economic cooperation with the SAARC framework has not been satisfactory for sometimes;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and